

Talent Search (CFDA No. 84.044)

I. Legislation

Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, Chapter 1, Section 402B, P.L. 96-374, as amended by P.L.102-325 (20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-12) (expires September 30, 1997).

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation 1/</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation 1/</u>
1967	\$2,492,000	1987	\$19,606,841
1970	5,000,000	1988	22,228,872
1975	6,000,000	1989	26,012,469
1980	15,300,000	1990	27,034,092
1981	17,113,000	1991	59,576,004
1982	17,057,594	1992	65,720,000
1983	17,057,594	1993	65,219,000
1984	17,628,233	1994	75,000,000
1985	20,728,468	1995	78,412,637
1986	19,606,841	1996	78,394,163

1/ The appropriations represent the amount allocated administratively by the Department of Education from funds appropriated jointly for all six federal TRIO programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers, Student Support Services, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program, and the Training Program for Special Program Staff and Leadership Personnel.

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

The goal of Talent Search is to identify qualified youths with potential for postsecondary education, to encourage them to complete secondary school and to enroll in postsecondary education programs, to publicize the availability of student financial aid, and to encourage secondary and postsecondary school dropouts to re-enter an educational program. The program provides funding for nonfinancial services that students may need in order to explore educational options. These activities are intended to encourage the educational advancement of disadvantaged students.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

Like Upward Bound, this program encourages students to graduate from high school and attend some form of postsecondary education. Talent Search also encourages high school and postsecondary dropouts to return to school. Beginning in FY 1989, priority was placed on serving younger students--those in the seventh and eighth grades. In 1993, Talent Search regulations allowed students who had completed at least the fifth grade to be eligible for participation. Talent Search

projects now serve disadvantaged persons who have completed the fifth grade and are between the ages of 11 and 27. In each project, two-thirds of the participants must be low-income persons (from families with incomes less than 150 percent of poverty level) who are also potential first-generation college students.

Central features in Talent Search are the emphasis on community outreach and the heavy reliance on personal, academic, and financial aid counseling. Talent Search provides a limited level of service per participant (per capita expenditure is \$263); this contrasts with per capita costs for Upward Bound, which is 14 times greater.

The 319 Talent Search projects funded in FY 1994 provide a range of services to more than 298,147 persons. Services provided by Talent Search projects include:

- Academic or personal counseling;
- Career exploration and aptitude assessment;
- Assistance with the process for reentering into high school or college
- Information on postsecondary education;
- Information on student financial assistance;
- Assistance in completing college applications, making financial aid applications, and preparing for admissions tests;
- Exposure to a range of career options;
- Tutorial services; and
- Attendance at cultural events.

Competitions for funds are held every fourth year. (A project period under Talent Search is four years. However, a project period of five years exists for grantees whose applications score in the highest 10 percent of all applications approved for new grants.) Most grants are made to community-based organizations and institutions of higher education. To promote continuity in the delivery of services, "prior experience" points are given to grant applicants that have conducted a Talent Search project during the three years preceding the competition. Up to 15 points can be awarded for the applicant's prior program performance as a Talent Search grantee. In FY 1994 (the last year in which a competition was held), the program was expanded by making 27 additional grant awards.

Talent Search FY 1996 Awards

Number of new projects	0
Number of continuation projects	319
Average award	\$245,750
Number of persons served	298,147
Average federal cost per participant	\$263

Strategic Initiatives

Performance reports will be revised to better measure the success of funded projects in meeting the goals of Talent Search. The Department will use the data to give grantees better feedback on project performance that may be used to improve program quality and effectiveness. Data obtained from performance reports will provide baseline information on student success rates that can be compared with national data on low-income, first-generation college students.

The Department developed a revised set of regulations for the Talent Search program. The new regulations increase project accountability for federal funds but allow projects to exercise greater discretion and flexibility in deciding how to deliver services.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

Please see the TRIO Program Performance Measures displayed in Chapter 508. See also Office-Wide Performance Indicators for the Office of Postsecondary Education displayed in the Overview (OPS) to the postsecondary education programs.

Table 1
Objective and Performance Indicator for
Talent Search

Goal: Ensure access to high-quality post-secondary education and lifelong learning.		
Objective	Performance Indicators	Data Sources/Next Update
Increase participation and completion rates of disadvantaged persons through the academic pipeline from middle school through graduate school.	The ratio of Talent Search participants who apply to college or apply for student financial aid compared with the numbers served will increase.	Annual performance reports (benchmark data available mid 1998).

The College Board conducted an exploratory study of Talent Search and Educational Opportunity Center programs in 1982-83 (V.2). A research person visited 11 local Talent Search projects and examined the annual performance reports and other program data collected by the Department of Education. The study concluded that it was difficult to evaluate program effectiveness because no common method governed the way the projects collect and report data to the program's performance-reporting system.

However, in 1993, the Department of Education published a report titled, Design Conference for the Evaluation of the Talent Search Program, (V.3) which contained six papers on issues that should be addressed in the next evaluation. The report also summarized the ideas expressed at a one-day conference where the authors discussed a future evaluation of Talent Search with The Department Education staff and some representatives of outside organizations.

In September 1993 the Department sponsored a small study to develop recommendations about performance indicators and to conduct a literature review of the needs of the target population and interventions that have been effective (V.4 & V.5). The study was intended to help the Department create a standard set of performance criteria that all projects could use to assess their own performance and also provided recommendations for improving the annual performance report form.

In December 1993 the National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations (NCEO) reported the results of its descriptive study on Talent Search (V.6). The group conducted a survey of project directors to obtain information about project characteristics. The findings show that 59 percent of Talent Search participants are minority, 41 percent of the participants are male, and over half the participants are in the 10th grade or below. Seventy-six percent of Talent Search participants continue their education past high school. The typical student spends 50 hours a year in program activities, at a cost of \$5 per hour. The typical Talent Search program has been funded for nine years, and most Talent Search programs are operated by public four-year or two-year colleges. The two most frequently offered programs in Talent Search are career counseling and academic counseling. Four of the most frequently offered program services out of the dozen mentioned involve some form of counseling. The typical staff to student ratio is 1:183.

Each Talent Search grantee is required to maintain its own project-level performance objectives and measures. The extent to which these performance measures are met is reported yearly by the projects on the Department's annual performance report form. Prior experience points are given to grant applicants that have conducted a Talent Search project during the three years preceding the competition. Up to 12 prior experience points can be earned for the extent to which the applicant has achieved the performance goals and objectives as stated in the previously funded application or negotiated program plan.

IV. Planned Studies

None.

V. Sources of Information

1. Program files.
2. Paul L. Franklin, Helping Disadvantaged Youths and Adults Enter College: An Assessment of Two Federal Programs (Washington, DC: College Entrance Examination Board, 1985).
3. Design Conference for the Evaluation of the Talent Search Program (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1993).
4. Consuelo Arbona, First Generation College Students: A Review of Needs and Effective Interventions (Houston, TX: Decision Information Resources, Inc. prepared for U.S. Department of Education, unpublished, 1994).
5. Report on Talent Search Program Performance Criteria (Houston, TX: Decision Information Resources, Inc. prepared for U.S. Department of Education, unpublished, 1994).

6. John B. Lee, Suzanne B. Clery, and JBL Associates, Pre-College Intervention Programs: A Descriptive Study of Talent Search (Washington, DC: National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations, Center for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 1993).

VI. Contacts for Further Information

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